

**REMARKS**

Claims 5-8, 10, 12, 16 and 17 are currently pending in the application. Only claims 16 and 17 are in independent form.

The Office Action states that the declaration as filed is defective. Accordingly, a new signed declaration is attached hereto. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

The Office Action states that the use of the trademark "VELCRO" has been noted in the application and that it should be capitalized wherever it appears and be accompanied by generic terminology. This amendment has been made to the specification and reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

A substitute specification excluding the claims as required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.125(a) because the form of the amendments would render printing difficult. Attached hereto is a substitute specification. Also accompanied herewith is a statement that the substitute specification contains no new matter and a marked up copy showing the amendments which are being made, via the substitute specification relative to the specification as filed.

The Office Action states that the disclosure is objected to because reference numerals 20 and 22 are missing from the drawings. Figures 1 and 2 have been amended to properly show numerals 20 and 22. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

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Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and/or use the invention. The Office Action states that the claim recites the base unit being "operatively connected" to the cartridge unit. The claim has been amended to more specifically recite this relationship as disclosed in the specification. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 5-8, 10, 12, 16, and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by the Rockett et al reference. the term "mat" is set forth in the specification, namely in the title. Additionally, the term "cartridge top" is first set forth on Page 6, the bottom line and is then used throughout the specification for indicating the top portion of the mat. Further, the "moisture absorbance means" is set forth in the specification on Page 7, first full paragraph wherein the specification recites "the absorbent core." The barrier means is set forth in the same paragraph wherein the specification states "the core is sealed with a moisture barrier." The "base unit" is first set forth on Page 6, second full paragraph beginning "the base unit is secured" and is repeated throughout the specification. Accordingly, there is support for the terminology used in the claims and reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

It is respectfully submitted that the present amendment places the application in condition for allowance as it removes all remaining issues in dispute. The claims have been made no broader in scope thereby requiring no further searching and raising no new issues. In fact, all claims now include limitations of previously pending claims and were therefore previously searched. Since there is no prior art cited against any of these claims, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims are in condition for allowance.

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It is respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered in order to place the application in condition for allowance or at least in better condition for appeal. The application is placed in condition for allowance as it addresses and resolves each and every issue that remains pending. Claims have also been amended to clearly distinguish over the prior art. The application is made at least in better condition for appeal as the amendment removes many issues thereby simplifying the issues on appeal. That is, each and every rejection under 35 USC 112 has been overcome exactly as suggest in the Office Action. Further, the claims have been amended to more specifically define the invention while raising no new issues which would require any further searching. Rather, the amendments have been made in view of comments made in the Office Action which clearly distinguish the presently pending claims over the cited prior art. Hence, it is respectfully requested that the amendment be entered.

This amendment could not have been made earlier as the amendment corrects technical errors and further defines the present application over the prior art in accordance with the suggestion made in the Office Action, the suggestion first being made in the outstanding Office Action. Hence, since there remains no further issues to be resolved, it is respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered.

In conclusion, it is respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered in order to place the application in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully requested.

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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fee or credit any overpayment in connection with this communication to our Deposit Account No. 11-1449.

Respectfully submitted,

KOHN & ASSOCIATES

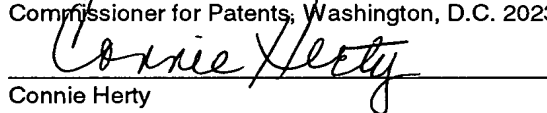


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Date: January 3, 2002

**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on January 3, 2002.

  
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**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**SPECIFICATION:**

Page 7, line 29, please insert the following:

The base unit is secured to a surface with various types of fasteners including [Velcro] VELCRO™ or hoop and Loop devices. In the preferred embodiment, a Hoop and Loop device from 3M Corp. will be used. The base unit is typically .5mm to 3.0mm thick with 75 to 95 durameter providing flexibility for various sloping surfaces.

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

17. (Three times Amended) A urinal or commode mat for protecting a restroom surface from spillage of liquids, said mat comprising:

a cartridge unit including

- (a) moisture absorbing means for absorbing and retaining liquid,
- (b) a cartridge top disposed over and connected to said moisture absorbing means for collecting and draining liquid onto said moisture absorbing means,
- (c) barrier means disposed beneath and connected to said moisture absorbing means for preventing moisture escape from said moisture absorbing means; and

a base unit shaped as shown in Figure 1, [operatively connected to] engaged with said cartridge unit and containing said cartridge unit.

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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re application of: Rickie J. Wright et al

Serial No. 09/394,474

Group Art Unit: 3751

Filed: 09/11/99

Examiner: FETSUGA, R.

For: SURFACE PROTECTION SYSTEM MAT

Attorney Docket No: 7107.00002

**STATEMENT**

This is in response to the Office Action dated November 1, 2001, Paper No. 21. Please enter the following statement under CFR 1.125(b).

✓ It is hereby stated that the attached substitute specification contains no new matter and a marked-up copy is attached, showing the amendments made.

Respectfully submitted,

KOHN & ASSOCIATES

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Date: January 3, 2002

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Marked up of New

**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE**

**DESCRIPTION – Figures 1, 1A and 2**

A preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated in Figures 1, 1A and 2 (top views). The invention is used under a wall-mounted urinal in men's restrooms. The cartridge-top 12 (Figure 1) is made of polypropylene, polyethylene, vinyl, nylon, rubber or any other material that can be molded or injection-molded in this fashion.

The dimensions and configurations of the cartridge-top-12 are:

1. The thickness is typically .5mm to 1.5mm and has overall dimensions of roughly 52cm (square shaped).
2. In the preferred embodiment, the front dimension is narrowed to approximately 22mm x 24mm providing more comfortable standing room.
3. The front has also been beveled, or sloped, and rounded to minimize tripping and/or snagging and potential personal injury.

The cartridge-top 12 includes a rigid edge portion 20 for being disposed over and engaging the base unit 18. The rigid end portion 20 extends over the base unit 18 in engagement with the base unit 18. The base unit-18 correspondingly including a rim portion 22 which is able to mate with the rigid edge portion 20 of the cartridge-top 12. This rim portion 22 extends around the perimeter of the base unit 18, thereby providing a solid mating engagement with the cartridge-top 12 on all sides. The rigid edge portion 20 includes an internal tunnel surface that sits over and mates with the upwardly

projecting rim portion 22 of the base unit 18 about the complete perimeter of the unit. This interconnection maintains the cartridge top 12 onto base unit 18 while allowing for easy separation and disposal of the cartridge 12. Also, it provides an excellent seated arrangement of the cartridge 12 in the base 18.

The absorbent core (Figure 1A) is manufactured from super-absorbent material 14 such as polymer or fiber in a percentage to cotton-fluff depending upon the embodiment. In the preferred embodiment, the Super-absorbent material 14 is in a ten-percent proportion to the cotton-fluff. The core is sealed with a moisture barrier 16 (Figure 10) to prevent leakage of the liquid into the base unit 18. It is sonic-welded to the cartridge-top 12, fixed with adhesives, or attached in some similar fashion.

The base unit 18 is secured to a surface with various types of fasteners including Velcro or Hoop and Loop devices. In the preferred embodiment, a Hoop and Loop device from 3M Corporation will be used. The base unit 18 [it] is typically .5mm to 3.0mm thick with 75 to 95 durameter providing flexibility for various sloping surfaces.

### **Additional Embodiments**

Additional embodiments include the use for wall-mounted toilets. This embodiment [would be] is a longer system for the additional length required. Another embodiment [would address] is for use with floor-mounted toilets with an appropriate cutout. A further embodiment for residential or office use [would have] includes dimensions of approximately 55cm by 40cm. It protects floors from wet boots and shoes. A similar embodiment, but larger in size, [would be] is used in entrances to commercial buildings. In this embodiment, several separate floor protection units 10 are joined together to provide a larger area of surface protection. A variety of methods to connect the units 10 can be employed. Finally, embodiments of a



smaller size can be used on countertops and liquid vending machines. The size would approximate 30cm x 10cm to 80cm x 30cm.

### **Alternative Embodiment**

There are various possibilities with regard to the design of the cartridge-top 12 waffle grid (Figure 3). The shape can be that of any geometric design that provides an opening at the top with a smaller outlet at the bottom. Any polygon or conical configuration allowing liquid to flow into the absorbent core 14 (Figure 1A) with a minimum of splashing may be used.

### **ADVANTAGES**

From the description above, a number of advantages with this invention in the preferred embodiment are evident:

(a) Restroom floors are dryer with urine drips and splashes contained inside the cartridge-top's 12 absorbent core 14.

(b) Maintenance is greatly decreased because the cartridge-top 12 is disposable, requiring no cleaning or rinsing.

(c) Cross-contamination is virtually eliminated because shoes need not touch the cartridge-top 12.

(d) Tripping hazard is minimized by the beveled front edge of the cartridge-top 12.

In the additional embodiments, the following advantages are apparent:

(a) Application includes floor and wall-mounted toilets and urinals.

(b) Residential and office use protects floors from wet footwear.

Commercial businesses can minimize slip and fall hazards in wet weather.

(c) Surface protection can be given to vending machines which dispense liquids (hot or cold).

## **Operation**

The manner of using the floor protection system is to place the base unit 18 under a urinal. It is secured to the floor with the fastener provided. The cartridge-top 12 (containing the mated absorbent core) is snapped into the top of the base unit 18. In the preferred embodiment, the cartridge-top 12 is changed on a scheduled basis, usually weekly.

In the additional embodiments, the absorbent core 14 will contain higher amounts of polymers or fibers. The suggested change cycle is thirty days. If necessary, more frequent changes may be made. For each of the additional embodiments, the operation is the same. The base unit 18 is placed in a desired spot and fastened to the surface. The cartridge-top 12 is positioned on top of the base unit 18 and snapped into place.

**Conclusion, Ramification, and Scope**

Accordingly, the reader will see that while its main focus is on floor protection, the invention addresses countertop and other surfaces as well.

When used in the floor protection embodiment, the base unit-18, secured to the floor, cannot be easily dislodged. This provides more consistent protection. Maintenance is simplified by disposing both the cartridge-top 12 and the mated absorbent core during routine trash collection. No cleaning or rinsing of the cartridge-top 12 is required. Costly maintenance time is also reduced.

Users do not stand on the floor protection system 10, minimizing cross-contamination from shoes. Additionally, the beveled front edge of the cartridge-top 12 reduces trip and fall hazards. In other applications, the invention provides liquid protection to carpeted or wood floors and countertops in residents and offices.

Although the description above contains many specifics, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention. It merely provides illustrations of some of the presently preferred and additional embodiments. For example, the invention can have other shapes (i.e. circular, oval, trapezoidal, triangular, etc.). The cartridge-top's 12 waffle grid can also have other shapes and designs. The cartridge-top 12 could even be separate from the absorbent core, allowing changing of the core only, etc.

Thus, the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents, rather than by the examples given.